Kalam(idad)

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UPLB Writers' Club

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Mga akda nina:
afterwards
blumea
kamaitis
mirasol
sebs.
tadyang

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Pavnang Salita

mirasol at tadyang

Karaniwan na nating nararanasan ang kalamidad sa Pilipinas, at taon-taon na tayong hinahagupit ng mga baha at lindol. Ngunit ang sala ng patuloy na panunupil sa masa ay hindi nasa sakuna, kundi nasa sistemang walang pakialam sa taong sinasakupan nito. Isang sistemang tila manhid sa sigaw ng mga nasasalanta at napapabayaan.

Ang **Kalam(idad)** ay isang pagninilay sa mga kasalukuyang nangyayari sa ating bansa. Sa gitna ng lahat ng ito, kumakalam ang sikmura ng marami. Hindi lang dahil sa gutom, kundi dahil sa kawalan ng katarungan. Iba't iba ang panawagan ng masa ngunit iisa lamang ang layunin nila: ang mapawi ang kagutumang dinaranas nila.

Ikaw, anong nagpapakalam sa iyo?

Mga Nilalaman

The Crack in Between	sebs.
In Her City There is Only Silence and a Few Lights	afterwards
yosi breyk	tadyang
When It All Comes Crashing Down and What Comes After	kamaitis
Sa Likod ng Madla	mirasol
sigaw	blumea

The Crack in Between

sebs.

It's been on the news for days – more than five major earthquakes in ten days, the strongest at 7.4 magnitude. I was scrolling over tiktok when I saw it: shaky videos, collapsing ceilings, people clinging to the ground while others hid under tables. I paused for a moment and thought. What if that happened here? What if the ground I'm standing on begins to move, and within half a minute, everything falls apart?

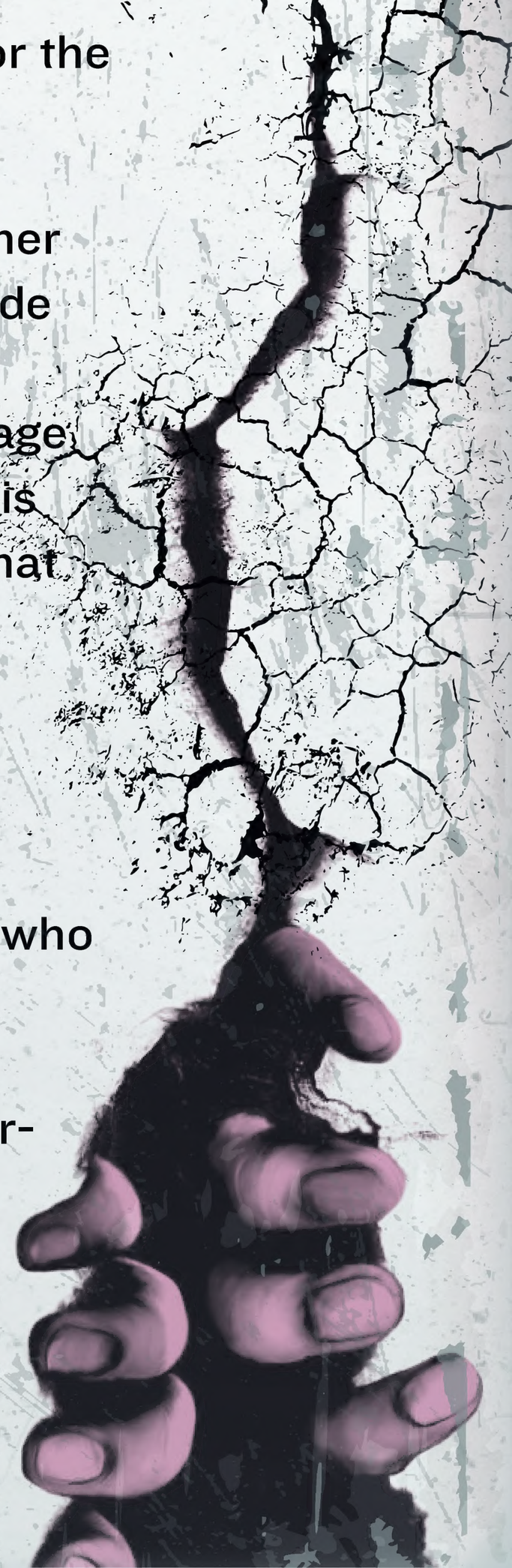
At first, I wanted to blame nature. How cruel, I thought, for the Earth to turn against us. But is nature really the culprit?

I learned back in elementary school that disasters are either natural or man-made. But this distinction never really made sense to me. The shaking ground doesn't kill, the falling concrete does. Rain isn't the enemy, until the city's drainage fails and water has nowhere to go but up. And a typhoon is merely a cold night's sleep, unless you live under a roof that could fly with the next gust of wind.

It seems to me that what kills us during so-called natural disasters isn't so natural at all.

The truth is, nature may strike us all, but society decides who bleeds, who dies, and who looks away. Some lose their homes; others lose only their WiFi. Some pray that help would come to rescue; others pray about it online from air-conditioned rooms. Maybe the disaster isn't just the earthquake itself, but in how unequally it is felt.

If the same earthquake had struck Malacañang, would our leaders be finally shaken awake? We can't say.



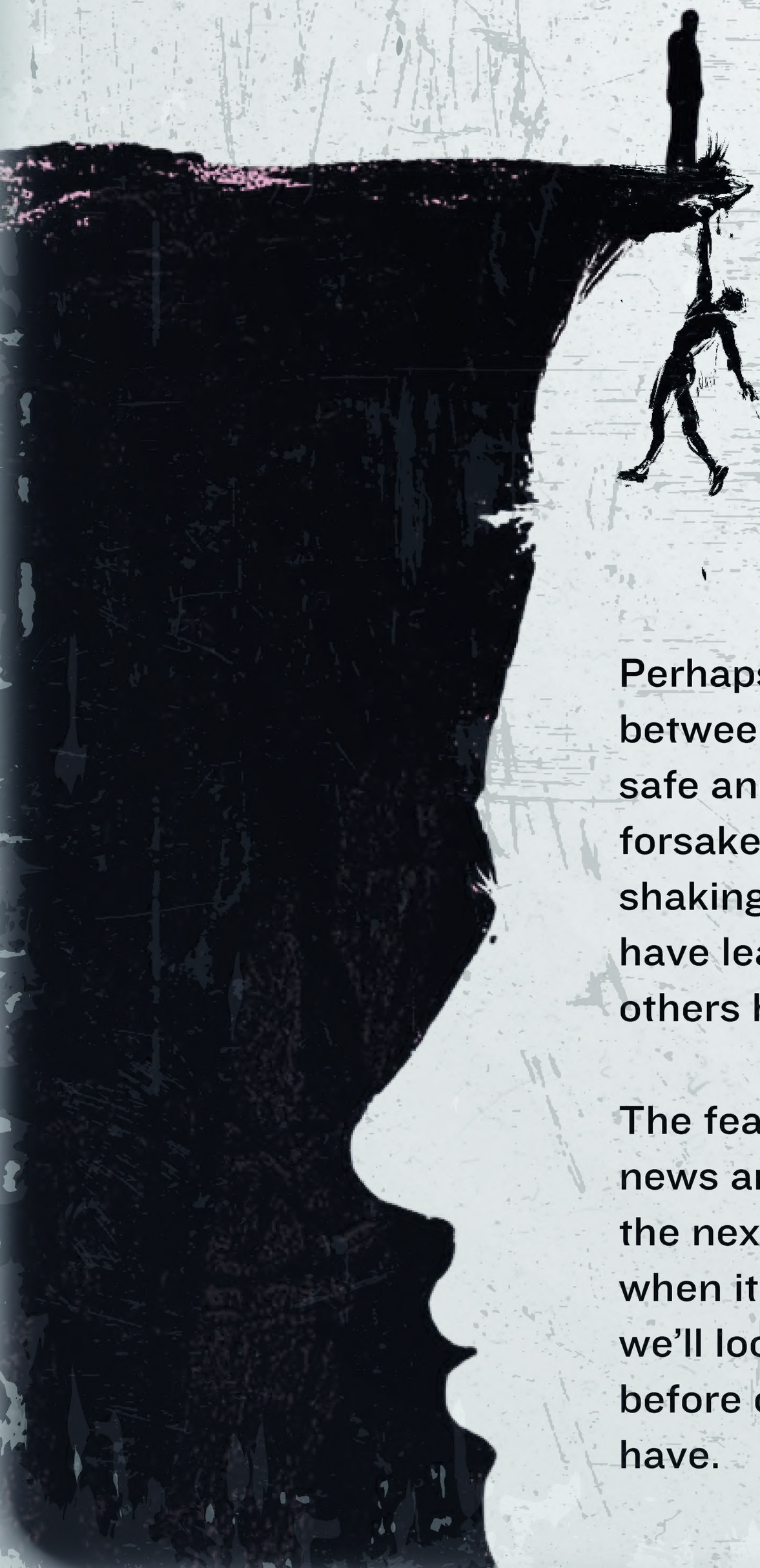
How would their bodies shake if it never touched the ground? It takes a deliberate choice for the privileged to be shaken awake. It is innate, and no magnitude could achieve its full measure.

I've watched the news every day since then, and each time, the numbers keep increasing. New major earthquakes, more aftershocks, the death tolls, the families displaced, the houses reduced to rubble – I feel something tug inside me. But the feeling passes quickly. It terrifies me that disasters are becoming routine. We start seeing numbers instead of lives, stories instead of truth.

The problem isn't a lack of awareness, which can only do so much as tickle our conscience. The problem is a lack of belief. Belief that every life matters. That the poor deserve safety just as much as the powerful do. And that disasters are not nature's wrath but our own negligence.

If our leaders truly believed, they would honor their oath with action, not evade accountability. They would build sturdier bridges, stronger systems. And at the most bare minimum, they would not steal from us. But belief demands risk, humility, and courage to stand in the shoes of those they serve, all of which threatens the very narrative that sustains them.

We define a disaster as a catastrophic event that disrupts life. But what if disaster does not always come with thunder or falling debris? What if it erodes us quietly – through corruption that deprives us of the structures that were supposed to protect us, through poverty that eats our lives away long before any strike, and through injustice that wears us down until it plants a doubt inside: Kaya pa ba? These don't make the headlines, but they shatter us just the same.



It is easier to blame nature than to accept accountability, to expose the cracks on the ground rather than complicity. And so we learn to live with them. We scroll past; whisper "kawawa naman"; move on; and preach the resilient Filipino narrative once again.

Perhaps the bigger disaster is the crack in between. Between the rich and the poor, the safe and the uncertain, the saved and the forsaken. The ground beneath us has long been shaking. The only difference is that some of us have learned to live with the cracks, while others have fallen through them.

The fear sat in my stomach after seeing the news and videos online. We never know when the next quake will strike, only that it will. And when it does, we'll reach the edge of the crack; we'll look down; and we'll see the truth unfold before our senses. Until then, belief is all we have.

In Her City There is Only Silence and a Few Lights

afterwards

The rest drowned in blackout. In her city, the water speaks louder than its bodies. It gathers at the corners, waits by the thresholds, and rehearses its entrance into bedrooms. The streets remember too much. The ruins of the past decade still linger beneath the asphalt, breathing like a second skin.

In her city, there is only silence. But she speaks to the storm. This is not your doing. Storms are brief. And they vanish into the horizon. What lingers is the architecture of irreverence: bridges that end too early, drains and alleys that choke on their own silence, skeletons of towering concrete. People walk barefoot in the current and rethink their gods and saints. Children learn the shapes of absence in candelight. At dawn. And still, silence. In the half-built bridges. In the choking drains and alleyways. In the abandoned buildings.

In her city, only a few lights remain. They tremble in exhaustion. The city continues to name its failures after disasters, as if the weather were the only language of collapse. But the rain has no politics. It only falls.

36

yosi breyk

tadyang

sinindihan ko ang dulo ng yosing inabot sa akin ni aling nena gamit ang nakataling lighter sa labas ng tindahan. gaya ng lagi, camel ulit. pinakamura, e. pero otso na pala ang bentahan kada stick. kaltas na naman sa baryang pamasahe ko sana.

napapikit ako nang dumagundong ang madilim nang kalangitan. sinubukan kong hindi pansinin ang humahampas na tubig ulan sa akin, at ang mamasa-masa kong longsleeve na gamit na gamit ko nitong mga nakaraang buwan. butas na nga, e. pero nagagamit ko pa naman kaya p'wede na rin.

magrereklamo pa ba 'ko?

ibinuga ko ang usok mula sa bibig ko at panandaliang nilasap ang ilang segundong ginhawang naramdaman ko nang maamoy ko ang pamilyar na samyo ng sigarilyo. sabay ng paglutang ng usok sa hangin ay ang biglang mas pagbigat ng buhos ng ulan. napangiwi ako at umurong sa maliit na silong sa tindahan. katabi ko na ang bakal na naghaharang sa mga tinda ni aling nena.

pero bukod sa akin na basang basa na ay mas mabigat ang pag-aalala ko sa bubong ng bahay namin. nakakapuno na nga kami ng ilang batsa tuwing umuulan, ngayon pa kayang may parating na bagyo?

napaisip ako ng puwede kong iuwi kay bunso. ilang linggo nang nanghihingi, nagtatampo na sa akin. wala naman akong maibigay kundi ang pangakong, *"sa susunod na linggo, pramis"* na sawa na raw siyang marinig. galit na nga ang misis ko at trabaho pa rin daw ang inaatupag ko kahit ganito na raw ang panahon. mag-si-signal number 3 raw kami, sabi sa TV. tinanong pa ako kung wala raw ba akong pake sa kanila, at ibang *building* ang tinatrabaho ko kaysa sa bahay naming nagluluha na ng tubig ulan.

pinitik ko ang sigarilyo hanggang sa malaglag ang abo. *hay, buhay!*

kung bawat segundo lang ay kagaya lang ng aanim na minutong wala akong problema kundi ang paubos ko nang sigarilyo, wala na akong hihingin pa.

sinubukan kong tanawin ang *mall* na itinatayo namin sa malayo at napailing. tiyak ay *delay* na naman ang sasabihin ni *engineer* niyan. mabuti nga at maagap iyong mga kasama ko at natapalan agad namin ng tarapal 'yong mga gamit sa labas bago umulan. sa loob daw kami muna tatrabaho. siguro ay mabuti na rin na may pasok ako ngayon.

no work, no pay ba naman.

mula sa building ay natanaw ko ang katrabaho kong si arjay na papalapit na sa akin na may dala-dalang payong.

itong si arjay, mabait talaga. napakamasayahin. namatay nga ang nanay niyan nung isang buwan pero pumasok pa rin sa trabaho kinabukasan. may dala pang sopas para sa'min. sabi niya, bawal daw siyang um-absent at pramis niya sa nanay niya ay babalik siya sa hayskul.

naalala ko tuloy ang sarili ko sa kaniya no’ng kakasimula ko pa lang rumaket, limang taon na ang nakalilipas. sabi ko ay tutuloy ako sa kolehiyo gaya ng gusto sa ‘kin ng tatay. mag-engineer daw ako at magaling naman daw ako sa math. kaso wala e, mahirap ang buhay, at hindi na lang din naman sarili ko ang binubuhay ko sa araw-araw kasi pamilyado na ako.

sa totoo lang, lahat naman kami sa trabaho, may problemang kanya-kanya. pero heto, at lagi pa rin kaming present sa site.

sibak agad kung hindi, e.

sa lamig ng ragasang gumigipit sa amin, tanging init ng sigarilyong paubos na ang kaginhawaan para sa aming naghihikahos.

inapakan ko ang upos. balik sa trabaho.

WHEN IT ALL COMES CRASHING DOWN AND WHAT COMES AFTER

kamaitis

I. Those Who Still Call

Buckling knees stride against wrathful torrents. Bones weathered by years of labor now rendered fruitless in the wake of others' indolence. Banners are raised high, swaying with the same wind that kisses flaking cheeks, yet no arm lowers. Croaks of voices resound an age-old call, their volume rivaling that of the thunder—they will not be silenced. The tide rises, but so do they—against reason, against age. They continue their march through the streets they call home as Death watches among the ranks. With hands folded behind his back, he looks on in pity, knowing this might be their last taste of the "promised land."

II. Those Left Behind

Stinging chains chafe their necks as metal bars cloud their vision. The cages rattle with the weight of the storm. Time ticks as the flood fast approaches—it is not long before they are engulfed by murky waters. It is now that they find themselves helpless. What use are four limbs when all are forced to kiss the ground? Their echo grows louder, but no one heeds; only footfalls fading into the distance accompany their pleas. They claw against rust—but to no avail—their role as man's best friend now void of meaning. Death sighs, unable to interfere—for it is not in his place. He wishes to take them with mercy, but can only wait as the waves receive them with open arms, the same way their masters once did.

III. Those Who Carry Tomorrow

Milky anklets that once mimicked pearly whites are now drenched in sludge. Each day is a journey as tumultuous as the odyssey, a game of tempting fate with every twist and turn. Yet education must persist in spite of mayhem—or so they were told. For who will they be if not the hope of the future? Inside the four corners of the classroom knowledge becomes a tool, but outside of it—defiance. Most days, Death walks with them, through the pools of mud or beneath the scorching heat, but not to take—not yet. He only observes as arms clutch textbooks and as sentences and equations are mumbled under breaths, hoping for them to see the tomorrow they long for.

IV. Those Made to Fall

How long will they remain standing before descending like a house of cards? The hands of God never grazed their skin, for they were made to fall and wither. Only through mortals' touch do they know of their beginning, unaware that this would also be their end. Their foundations, hollow and fragile like empty promises, were meant to protect and shelter—now a place of ruin. When the shake of the earth visits, or when the sky's eyes well up with tears, they too weep for the damage to come. Will Death instead caress their inanimate flesh as they bring souls unsuspecting down his lair?

V. He Who Comes After

In all that transpires he is present. He stands in the shadow, bidding his time through the storm, the quake, and the destruction wrought by the sin of men. The elders' calls, the animals' pleas, the youth's burdened shoulders, and the caving walls' silent outcry—all fall under his senses. He moves through the rubble, a witness to the waste laid again and again by humanity's fatal flaw—greed, the greatest disaster to strike the Earth. A truth as inevitable as change, he takes all and spares none; this is his eternal blessing and curse. The cycle may repeat, but even the corrupt will meet him too, and so he waits, patient, to deliver what is due.

SA LIKOD NG MADLA

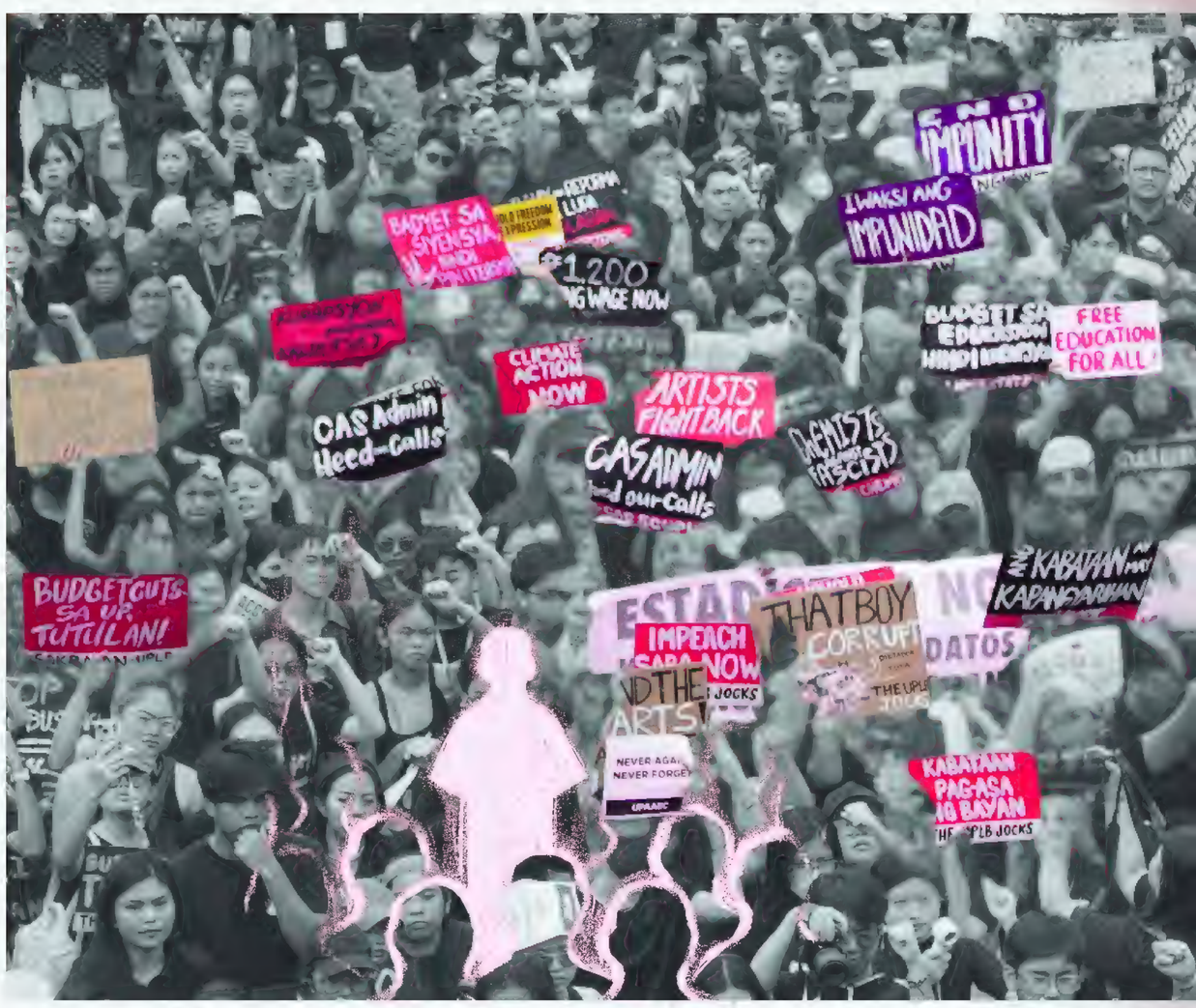
mirasol

Naulinigan ko sa balita
ang nangyayari sa bansa.
Ano kayang aking magagawa,
kung laging nasa likod ng madla?

Hindi masikmura ang katiwalian
ngunit barado ang takot na lalamunan;
mapapansin ba ang panawagan
ng isang karaniwang mamayaman?

Tila musika sa aking tainga
ang tinig ng pagkakaisa,
ang dagundong ng mga paa,
ang ingay ng pag-aalsa ng masa.

Babasagin nang paunti-unti
ang katahimikang nakaririndi,
hahanapin aking boses muli
at ipagsisigawan ang nakikitang mali.



Magagawa ko rin kaya
na tumindig para sa bansa?
Matatagpuan ko na ba
ang sarili sa harap ng madla?

SIGAW

blumea

sigaw
ang unang narinig ng mamà
ngunit hindi pa rin bumabangon
ilang beses mang ugain
ng mumunting kamay ng bata

"gising ka na ba?"
malat na tanong ng paslit.
walang tugon mula sa mamang
namaga ang tenga
kaya't buntong-hininga na lamang ang
nagawa

sinubukan nitong bumangon
impit ang iyak
at napabalik lang din sa paghiga
sinubukang muli
at umirit ang mama
pagkat lumubog naman ang hita
sa nakalulunod
na pawis at luha
na ngayo'y nahahaluan na
ng tumutulong nana

sunod sunod na hiyaw
at biglaang pagtahimik
na muling babasagin ng palahaw
hanggang sa ang maga ay mas lumala
at pumutok na ang pigsa

humupa na ang pamamaga
kaya't oo na ang tugon niya
pagkat malinaw na sa tenga
ang muling tanong ng bata
gising ka na ba?

Panghuling Salita

blumea

Hindi ka makatutulog nang mahimbing kung patuloy kakalam ang iyong sikmura. Kaya’t inaasahan namin, na hanggang patuloy ang mga kalamidad, ay patuloy ka pa rin sa pangangalampag. **In between the cracks**, **in your city**, sa gitna ng iyong **yosi break**, maging **sa likod ng madla**, ang **sigaw** mo naman ang maririnig namin.

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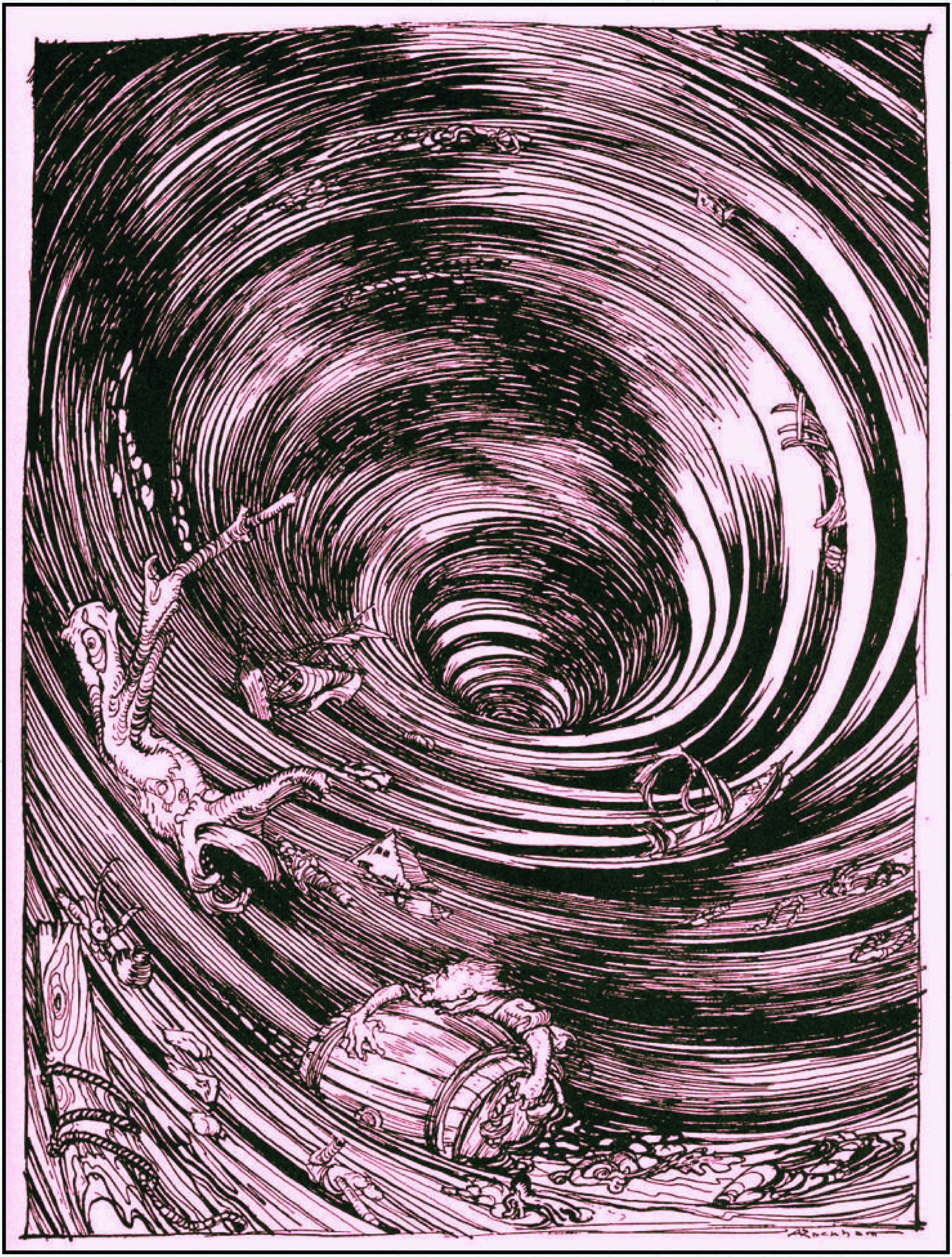

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UPLB WRITERS' CLUB

Ang UPLB Writers' Club ay isang sosyokultural na organisasyong binubuo ng mga baguhang manunulat. Itinatag noong 1970s, ang organisasyon ay patuloy na kumikilos upang magsulong ng malay at makabuluhang akdang pampanitikan sa loob at labas ng pamantasan.